

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Joshua David Mosley,) C/A No.: 1:19-1550-RMG-SVH
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
vs.)
)
Correctional Officer Katina) ORDER AND NOTICE
Scarcella,)
)
 Defendant.)
)

Joshua David Mosley (“Plaintiff”), proceeding pro se and in forma pauperis, filed this complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983, alleging a violation of his civil rights. Pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B) and Local Civ. Rule 73.02(B)(2)(e) (D.S.C.), the undersigned is authorized to review such complaints for relief and submit findings and recommendations to the district judge.

I. Factual and Procedural Background

Plaintiff is a pretrial detainee at the Cherokee County Detention Center. [ECF No. 1 at 2]. He alleges on May 4, 2019, Officer Katina Scarcella (“Scarcella”) transferred \$500 out of his account without his permission to deprive him of the funds necessary to obtain counsel. *Id.* at 4–6. Plaintiff states Scarcella obtained the money under false pretense, and he asserts causes of

action for larceny and card transaction fraud. *Id.* at 4. He requests the \$500 be refunded to his account. *Id.* at 6.

II. Discussion

A. Standard of Review

Plaintiff filed his complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915, which permits an indigent litigant to commence an action in federal court without prepaying the administrative costs of proceeding with the lawsuit. To protect against possible abuses of this privilege, the statute allows a district court to dismiss a case upon a finding that the action fails to state a claim on which relief may be granted or is frivolous or malicious. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(i), (ii). A finding of frivolity can be made where the complaint lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992). A claim based on a meritless legal theory may be dismissed *sua sponte* under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). *See Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 327 (1989).

Pro se complaints are held to a less stringent standard than those drafted by attorneys. *Gordon v. Leekte*, 574 F.2d 1147, 1151 (4th Cir. 1978). A federal court is charged with liberally construing a complaint filed by a pro se litigant to allow the development of a potentially meritorious case. *Erickson v. Pardus*, 551 U.S. 89, 94 (2007). In evaluating a pro se complaint, the plaintiff's allegations are assumed to be true. *Fine v. City of N.Y.*, 529 F.2d 70, 74 (2d Cir. 1975). The mandated liberal construction afforded to pro se pleadings

means that if the court can reasonably read the pleadings to state a valid claim on which the plaintiff could prevail, it should do so. Nevertheless, the requirement of liberal construction does not mean that the court can ignore a clear failure in the pleading to allege facts that set forth a claim currently cognizable in a federal district court. *Weller v. Dep’t of Soc. Servs.*, 901 F.2d 387, 390–91 (4th Cir. 1990).

B. Analysis

A complaint must contain “a short and plain statement of the claim showing that the pleader is entitled to relief.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(a)(2). Although the court must liberally construe a pro se complaint, the United States Supreme Court has made it clear a plaintiff must do more than make conclusory statements to state a claim. *See Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 677–78 (2009); *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007). Rather, the complaint must contain sufficient factual matter, accepted as true, to state a claim that is plausible on its face, and the reviewing court need only accept as true the complaint’s factual allegations, not its legal conclusions. *Iqbal*, 556 U.S. at 678–79.

To state a plausible claim for relief under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, an aggrieved party must sufficiently allege he was injured by “the deprivation of any [of his or her] rights, privileges, or immunities secured by the [United States] Constitution and laws” by a “person” acting “under color of state law.” *See* 42

U.S.C. § 1983; *see generally* 5 Charles Alan Wright & Arthur R. Miller, *Federal Practice and Procedure* § 1230 (3d ed. 2014).

Liberally construed, Plaintiff presents a Fourteenth Amendment claim of deprivation of property without due process. The Due Process Clause protects prisoners from deprivation of property without due process of law, *Wolff v. McDonnell*, 418 U.S. 539, 556 (1974), and prisoners have a protected interest in their personal property, *see Hansen v. May*, 502 F.2d 728, 730 (9th Cir. 1974). However, while an authorized, intentional deprivation of property is actionable under the Due Process Clause, “an unauthorized intentional deprivation of property by a state employee does not constitute a violation of the procedural requirements of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment if a meaningful [state] postdeprivation remedy for the loss is available.” *Hudson v. Palmer*, 468 U.S. 517, 533 (1984); *see also Parratt v. Taylor*, 451 U.S. 527, 541-42 (1981) (holding the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is not violated when a state employee negligently deprives an individual of property, provided that the state makes available a meaningful postdeprivation remedy), *overruled on other grounds by Daniels v. Williams*, 474 U.S. 327, 332 (1986); *Logan v. Zimmerman Bush Co.*, 455 U.S. 422, 435-36 (1982) (holding that postdeprivation remedies do not satisfy due process where a deprivation of property is caused by conduct pursuant to established state procedure, rather than random and unauthorized action);

Daniels v. Williams, 474 U.S. 327, 332 (1986) (“Where a government official’s act causing injury to life, liberty, or property is merely negligent, ‘no procedure for compensation is *constitutionally* required.’”) (quoting *Parratt*, 451 U.S. at 548).

“[I]n South Carolina, prisoners may bring a civil action in state court for recovery of personal property against prison officials who deprived them of property without state authorization.” *Drake v. Brown*, C/A No. 6:09-1449-JFA-WMC, 2009 WL 1749375, at *2 (D.S.C. June 22, 2009) (citing *McIntyre v. Portee*, 784 F.2d 566, 567 (4th Cir. 1986) (finding South Carolina’s postdeprivation remedy under S.C. Code Ann. § 15-69-10 *et seq.* sufficient to satisfy due process requirements)).

Plaintiff has not alleged Scarella acted pursuant to established state procedure, nor has Plaintiff alleged why South Carolina’s postdeprivation remedy is inadequate or unavailable. Accordingly, Plaintiff has failed to state an actionable due process claim, and his complaint is subject to summary dismissal.

NOTICE CONCERNING AMENDMENT

Plaintiff may attempt to correct the defects in his complaint by filing an amended complaint by June 25, 2019, along with any appropriate service documents. Plaintiff is reminded an amended complaint replaces the original complaint and should be complete in itself. *See Young v. City of Mount Ranier*,

238 F.3d 567, 572 (4th Cir. 2001) (“As a general rule, an amended pleading ordinarily supersedes the original and renders it of no legal effect.”) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). If Plaintiff files an amended complaint, the undersigned will conduct screening of the amended complaint pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915A. If Plaintiff fails to file an amended complaint or fails to cure the deficiencies identified above, the undersigned will recommend to the district court that the claims be dismissed without leave for further amendment.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

June 4, 2019
Columbia, South Carolina



Shiva V. Hodges
United States Magistrate Judge